

Figure 1 Letter to families used by Gifted Kids Network (www.giftedkidsnetwork.com)

Dear Parents and Students:

We will be utilizing a set of technologies that are part of what is called Web 2.0, a conglomeration of applications which include blogs, wikis, RSS, video and photo sharing, podcasts, and social bookmarking. It is the goal of the Gifted Kids Network to educate both students and parents so these ventures remain positive and safe.

We will utilize the following technologies and sites:

Gifted Kids Network: <http://www.giftedkidsnetwork.com> GKN is a private network that students will use as their 'homeroom'. The network includes wikis, blogs, discussion forums and space for students to upload their own products (essays, videos, podcasts, etc). Other than blogging, all student work will only be accessible to students, teachers, or parents, in the Gifted Kids Network.

1. Wiki A wiki is an easy to update webpage that is collaborative (all users can update the site)
2. Blogs: A blog or weblog is similar to an online journal or discussion forum. Blogs are a special type of web page that can be created and easily updated using a web browser. Each new entry has its own date stamp. Each entry has a comments section where visitors to the blog may leave comments for the author. Students will be posting their thoughts, ideas, and reflections on what they learn in Gifted Kids Network in their blog. This blogging project is designed to minimize risk to your child. The only personal identifying information included in the blog will be their first name. Students are allowed to post their interests and opinions, but not their age, email address, photographs of themselves, or other sensitive information.
3. Video and Photo sharing: students will be creating photo journals, video projects and other media rich projects to highlight their research and investigations in. Projects will be housed within our private wikispaces so they will not be accessible by anyone outside our group. When the projects are completed, students will be encouraged to share their projects with parents. Students and families will be offered the opportunity to share the student projects with a wider internet audience as appropriate. No projects will be shared without student and family written permission.
4. Google Docs: Students will have access to Google applications: word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation programs. Google documents are only visible to students, teachers, and families in the Gifted Kids Network. Students will not share their account ID and password with anyone!
5. Podcast, video files, and other media sources: students will be encouraged to use the vast resources of the internet. This may include articles, websites, podcasts, videos, and photos. Students should be responsible in their internet searches.
6. Discussion Forums: a discussion form is a series of shorts posts that allow students to carry on a conversation about a variety of topics. Discussion forums are monitored (all posts are visible to the adult facilitator).